

2004 Legislative Update

Janéa Holmquist
State Representative

13th Legislative District



Winter 2004

Dear Friends,

My fellow House Republicans and I have a list of priorities for the ensuing 60-day session in Olympia. We want to continue efforts to create an economic and regulatory environment which fosters job growth and prosperity for Washington's families and businesses.

Priorities Include:

- Fiscal responsibility.
- Improving our state's competitiveness.
- Protecting and modernizing water rights.
- Maintaining access to affordable health care.
- Strengthening our schools.
- Helping the cattle industry recover.

I am honored to be serving as your 13th District representative. I welcome your ideas and comments as we work on critical issues in the weeks ahead.

Sincerely,

Janéa Holmquist
State Representative

■ **Legislative Leadership
& Committee Assignment**
Republican Leadership
Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee
Commerce & Labor Committee

I Want To Hear From You!

Because of election-year restrictions, I am limited in the amount of unsolicited information I am allowed to send you in the coming months. In addition to this newsletter, I will be sending you one more update at the end of the 2004 session.

I can, however, answer questions or respond to any requests you may have at any time. It is important you know I am here to serve you and help you in your dealings with state government. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of assistance.

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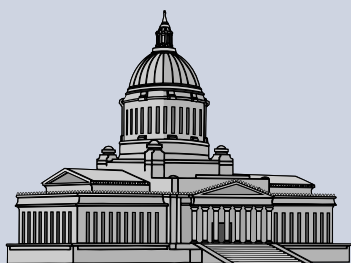
Additional information and legislative news can be found at <http://hrc.leg.wa.gov>

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Fiscal Responsibility

With 18 months left in the state 2003-05 fiscal period, it's critical we adhere to the balanced two-year operating budget adopted just last spring. As indicated by the governor's new supplemental budget proposal released in December, there is tremendous pressure to spend beyond our means and put taxpayers at risk.

Republicans fought hard last session for a balanced budget, and *we successfully closed a \$2.7 billion budget deficit without tax increases*. To retreat from this fiscally responsible approach would risk a tax increase and deep future cuts in essential services for people who truly need government assistance.

Any budget expenditures this year should be limited to necessary adjustments, such as school enrollment growth, and emergency needs so that we maintain a responsible, sustainable budget that protects taxpayers.

HB 1457 - I'm sponsoring this proposal which would require the state to conduct zero-based budgeting, resulting in greater fiscal responsibility.

Some facts:

- In 2003, lawmakers closed a \$2.7 billion state budget deficit without tax increases.
- The current budget provides \$488 million in reserves.
- The governor's proposed budget for 2004 would leave just \$172 million in reserves and would result in a \$1 billion deficit in the next biennium.

Improving Our State's Competitiveness

Despite our recent efforts to make Washington more competitive, our state's economic recovery continues to lag behind the rest of the country. We must continue to reform our state's tax and regulatory policies to make Washington an attractive place for employers and out-of-state businesses to expand here and bring new jobs.

I support reforms to improve accountability in the state's rule-making process, adding fairness and predictability to our regulatory environment.

HB 2598: Change of Venue - Currently, if a citizen wants to contest a state agency rule, he or she must go to the Thurston County courts in Olympia. This measure allows citizens to challenge rules in Yakima, Spokane, Whatcom, and Thurston County courts.

HB 2990-3000, HB 3030: Tort Reform - Do you want to go to Idaho to have a baby, to get a flu shot, or to see a family physician?

This may be a reality with out tort reform. Many businesses in Washington, including the medical and building industries, are pleading for help. My Republican colleagues and I are working on several tort reform bills to remedy this growing crisis.

- Congratulations to the Building Industry Association of Washington and the voters who supported and passed I-801 requiring Labor & Industries to roll back its ergonomic rules.

Two of the areas in which our state is least competitive in job creation are Washington's high minimum wage and costly industrial insurance system. We need additional changes to our state's workers' compensation program to protect workers while controlling costs.

Tax Incentives - I support renewing tax incentives set to expire, such as the rural sales and use tax deferral.

Maintaining Access to Affordable Health Care

While the vast majority of people have health care coverage, excessive regulation and skyrocketing costs have put our health care system on the brink of crisis. A majority of Washingtonians work for small businesses that are finding it increasingly difficult to provide employees with health coverage.

"There is too much money going to our legal system and not enough going to the care and well-being of Washington's families."

Those who have coverage are finding it more difficult to find health care providers, especially in rural areas where doctors and hospitals are being forced to limit services or close their doors because of the rising cost of doing business.

We want to lift regulatory burdens on small businesses to make it easier for them to provide health care to their employees. It's also critical we address the enormous increase in medical malpractice insurance costs that are strangling the health care industry. ***There is too much money going to our legal system and not enough going to the care and well-being of Washington's families.***

Water Rights

Present laws concerning the relinquishment of water rights threaten the economic vitality of water right holders. Presently, if a water right holder does not use the full beneficial use of their water right within a five year consecutive period of time, the water right or that portion which was not utilized is relinquished back to the state. Ironically, water right users who have practiced good conservation measures by using more efficient water delivery systems or even changing the type of crops grown on their land are losing substantial portions of their water rights.

The relinquishment policy is inequitable and my Republican colleagues and I are working to modernize relinquishment statutes to recognize these past and future conservation efforts and remove disincentives for those wishing to use water more efficiently. Unfortunately, this proposal is at odds with the governor's in-stream flow measure. I assure you I will not be supporting any proposal that will further put your property/water rights at risk.

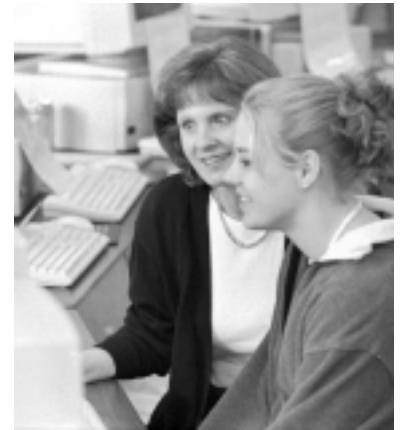
HB 2504 - I support this bill to protect property owners in the Odessa sub-area aquifer from losing their groundwater rights to relinquishment when switching to surface bureau water for the purpose of recharging the aquifer.

Strengthening Our Schools

I am continuing to support efforts to achieve excellence in our schools and help students transition successfully to a higher education system, preparing them for high-demand, high-paying fields.

Changes are needed in the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) requirements to ensure these standardized tests serve as a tool for effectively measuring our progress toward higher academic achievement.

Fast approaching is the first graduating class that will have to pass the WASL's Certificate of Mastery in order to graduate. I will continue to work towards creating flexibility and more local control with the Certificate of Mastery retakes. *I will also stay vigilant to ensure the financial burden of retakes does not fall on our local school districts.*



HB 3053 - I will be working with CWU to create a level playing field for tuition waivers.

Helping The Cattle Industry Recover

I will be working closely with ag industry representatives this session to do what's necessary to help Washington cattlemen recover by restoring markets at home and abroad. We will work on policies to help maintain consumer confidence over the long-term and provide short-term relief, if necessary, to help cattle farmers and related businesses survive the current crisis.

HB 2929 - I'm supporting this bill to provide a B&O tax suspension for families in cattle industry until the export bans are lifted.

I will continue to communicate with U.S. and state agriculture officials to ensure proper steps are taken to keep our food supply safe and the industry healthy.

It is important we allow science and good farming practices to prevail over politics during this difficult time. I am confident the industry can overcome this difficult challenge.

Here are some other bills I'm sponsoring this session:

HB 1309: Regulatory Reform - Ensuring agency rules do not exceed their statutory authorization by requiring legislative approval.

HB 3055: Public Safety - Closes the DUI defense loopholes for suppressing breath tests based on hypertechnicalities.

HB 3024: Property Rights - Limiting the state from acquiring more farmland in irrigation districts within reclamation projects.

HB 3129: Local Control - Demanding answers from the Dept. of Ecology before moving forward on Moses Lake, Kettle River and Colville River TMDL processes.

HB 2967: Public Safety - Establishes mandatory sentences for sex crimes against children.




Rep. Holmquist serves as Assistant Floor Leader for the House Republican Caucus. As a member of the caucus leadership team, she will help develop policy and establish priorities for House Republicans.

Janéa Holmquist

State Representative 13th Legislative District

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